

CHAPTER 13

RETREATS AND REVEILLES

Retreat is a ceremony in which the unit honors the U.S. flag when it is lowered in the evening. This ceremony is conducted at the direction of the unit commanders. The installation commander sets the time for sounding retreat. Reveille is a ceremony in which a unit honors the U.S. flag as it is raised in the morning. This ceremony is conducted at the direction of the commander. The installation commander sets the time for sounding reveille. (See Appendix K for more information on raising the flag.)

13-1. RETREAT HISTORY

The term “retreat” is taken from the French word “retraite” and refers to the evening ceremony. The bugle call sounded at retreat was first used in the French army and dates back to the Crusades. Retreat was sounded at sunset to notify sentries to start challenging until sunrise, and to tell the rank and file to go to their quarters. The ceremony remains as a tradition. The old cavalry call “To the Standard,” in use from about 1835, has been replaced by the present call of “To the Color.” This remains as music honoring the flag as it is lowered in the evening.

13-2. RETREAT SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The sequence of events for conducting retreat are discussed herein.

a. The unit is formed facing the flag five minutes (if possible) before the sounding of retreat. Four minutes before the sounding of retreat, the adjutant or other appointed officer takes his position centered on and facing the line of troops and commands ***Battalion, ATTENTION*** and then ***Parade, REST***.

b. The adjutant faces about and executes *Parade Rest*. On the last note of retreat, the evening gun is fired. The adjutant then comes to *Attention*, faces about, and commands ***Battalion, ATTENTION*** and ***Present, ARMS*** so that the unit is at *Present Arms* when the first note of “To the Color” or the National Anthem is sounded. The adjutant then faces about and executes *Present Arms*. The adjutant’s *Salute* is the signal for the band to begin playing “To the Color.”

c. At the last note of “To the Color” or the National Anthem, the adjutant faces about, commands ***Order, ARMS***, and then directs **TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR UNITS**. Unit commanders render the *Hand Salute*. The adjutant returns all *Salutes* with one *Salute*. This terminates the retreat formation.

NOTE: When subordinate units stand retreat, not as a part of a major command, the sequence is the same except the unit commander gives the commands.

13-3. COMMAND RETREAT HISTORY

Command retreat is a ceremony conducted with all members of the command present. Normally, it is conducted by a battalion or larger unit. In the 18th century, command retreat was a daily occurrence, not to honor the flag but as a signal for units to call the roll as a final accounting before reveille the following morning.

13-4. COMMAND RETREAT SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The sequence of events for conducting command retreat are discussed herein.

a. The unit is formed in line formation facing the flag (if possible). Subunits may be in mass formation. Subunits are brought to *Attention* at the approach of the commander and his staff, or at a predesignated signal.

b. The commander of troops forms his staff in line, takes his position two steps in front of the staff, and marches them to a position centered on and in front of the line of troops. He gives the proper commands to have himself and his staff facing the line of troops when halted.

c. The adjutant, as soon as the staff is halted and without command, moves from his position with the staff to a position midway between the commander of troops and the line of unit commanders. The adjutant commands **REPORT**. All unit commanders salute and report in succession from right to left ***“Sir, company all present or accounted for.”*** The adjutant returns each *Salute*. The adjutant then commands **Present, ARMS**, faces about, salutes, and reports to the commander of troops ***“Sir, all present or accounted for.”***

d. The commander of troops returns the *Salute* and directs **POST**. The adjutant moves to his position with the staff. The commander of troops commands **Order, ARMS**.

e. The left flank member of the staff gives the commands to move the staff from behind the commander of troops to a position two steps in front of the commander of troops. The commander of troops commands **Parade, REST**. If a band or field music is to be used, the commander comes to *Attention* at the appointed time and commands **SOUND RETREAT**. He then returns to *Parade Rest*.

f. On the last note of “Retreat,” the evening gun is fired and the commander of troops commands **Battalion, ATTENTION** and **Present, ARMS**. He then executes *About Face* and commands himself and his staff to **Present, ARMS**. The commander’s *Salute* is the signal for the band to begin playing “To the Color” or the National Anthem as the flag is lowered.

g. After the last note of music, the commander of troops commands himself and his staff to **Order, ARMS**, faces about, commands **Order, ARMS** and directs **TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR UNITS**. The unit commanders render the *Hand Salute*. The commander of troops returns all *Salutes* with one *Salute*. The commander of troops marches his staff away or dismisses them at this time.

13-5. REVEILLE HISTORY

Reveille was not originally intended as honors to the flag. In 1812, it was a drum call to signify that soldiers should rise for day duty and sentries should leave off night challenging. As time passed, reveille came to denote when the flag was raised in the morning and honors paid to it.

13-6. REVEILLE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The sequence of events for conducting reveille are discussed herein.

a. The unit is formed facing the flag five minutes (if possible) before the sounding of reveille. Four minutes before the sounding of reveille, the adjutant or other appointed officer (normally the duty officer) takes his position centered on the line of troops, commands the unit to **ATTENTION**, and commands **REPORT**.

b. All subunits (companies, batteries, or troops) report in succession from right to left, “*Sir, _____ company all present or accounted for,*” or “*Sir, _____ Company, _____ men absent.*” *Salutes* are exchanged with each report.

c. The adjutant commands **Parade, REST** and then assumes *Parade Rest* himself. If a band is present, about 30 seconds before reveille, the adjutant commands **ATTENTION**, directs **SOUND REVEILLE**, commands **Present, ARMS**, and then faces about. The adjutant’s *Salute* is the signal for the band to sound reveille and to fire the morning gun. When reveille is sounded by a recording, the call **ATTENTION** is sounded about 30 seconds before reveille. This ensures that the adjutant has sufficient time to command the units to **Present, ARMS** before the first note of reveille.

d. After the last note of reveille has sounded, the adjutant terminates his *Salute*, faces about, commands **Order, ARMS**, and then directs **TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR UNITS**. The adjutant returns all *Salutes* with one *Salute*. This terminates the ceremony.

NOTE: When a unit conducts the reveille ceremony not as a member of a major command, battalion, or company, the sequence of events remains the same except the unit commander gives all commands.

13-7. COMMAND REVEILLE HISTORY

Command reveille is conducted with all members of the command present. Normally, command reveille is conducted by a battalion or larger unit. Command reveille was conducted as Troop in 1812 and was used to muster the unit or for roll call.

13-8. COMMAND REVEILLE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The sequence of events for conducting command reveille are discussed herein.

a. The unit is formed in line formation facing the flag, if possible. Subunits may be in mass formation. Subunits are commanded to *Attention* at the approach of the commander and his staff.

b. The commander of troops takes his post two steps in front of and centered on his staff, commands **Forward, MARCH**, and marches his staff to a position centered on and in front of the line of troops. The commander of troops gives the proper commands to halt his staff in a position facing the line of troops.

c. As soon as the staff is halted by the commander of troops, the adjutant moves (without command) from his position with the staff to a position midway between the commander of troops and the line of unit commanders. The adjutant commands **Present, ARMS**, faces the commander of troops, salutes, and reports “*Sir, the battalion (brigade) is formed.*”

d. The commander of troops returns the *Salute* and directs the adjutant to receive the reports. The adjutant faces about and commands **Order, ARMS** and **REPORT**.

e. Unit commanders salute and report, in succession from right to left, “*Sir, _____ Company, all present or accounted for.*” The adjutant returns each unit commander’s *Salute*. After all unit commanders have reported, the adjutant faces the commander of troops, salutes, and reports “*Sir, all present or accounted for.*” The commander of troops returns the *Salute* and directs the adjutant to publish the orders.

f. The adjutant faces about without saluting and commands **ATTENTION TO ORDERS**. The adjutant then reads any orders or makes any announcements the

commander of troops wishes to publish. The adjutant, on completion of the publishing of orders, faces about and takes his post with the staff without saluting.

g. When the adjutant is in position, the left flank staff member commands ***Right, FACE; Forward, MARCH; Column Left, MARCH; Column Left, MARCH***. When the staff is centered on the commander of troops, he then commands ***Staff, HALT; Left, FACE***. About 30 seconds before the sounding of reveille, the commander of troops commands ***Present, ARMS***, executes *About Face* and commands ***Staff, Present, ARMS***. Reveille is then sounded either by record, field music, or band as the flag is raised.

h. At the first note of “Reveille,” the morning gun is fired. After the last note of music, the commander of troops commands ***Staff, Order, ARMS***, executes *About Face*, and commands ***Order, ARMS***; he then directs, **TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR UNITS**. The unit commanders salute. The commander of troops returns all *Salutes* with one *Salute*. He then marches his staff away or dismisses them. This terminates the ceremony.